

# FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union ♦♦♦ [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)

March 2014

## FLOOD FIGHTERS

Why we need a statutory duty See p12

**Political  
Fund  
Ballot**

See p14

**NEW RAID  
ON YOUR  
PENSION**

See p10







# Matt Wrack

## Floods, cuts, pensions ... fighting on all fronts

As the events of the last few months have demonstrated, more clearly than ever, the modern firefighter does not only fight fires. The ferocious floods that have hit large parts of the country have seen our members mobilised in their thousands to keep the public safe and to reduce the damage done to communities.

We have been highlighting this issue since the floods of 2007 turned this into a national political debate. We have argued that the service needs to plan properly for the long term and needs to ensure adequate equipment, training and resources are available to enable us to do our job.

Since then there have been improvements and the previous government did provide funding for some additional equipment. But it is far from sufficient. Visiting members

from various services working in Devon and Somerset and in Surrey highlighted to me a range of continuing problems – particularly around the provision of equipment and training.

What a disgrace it is that at the very time when firefighters are tackling a huge challenge – flooding – which is clearly far more than just a local issue, our service continues to be slashed to bits as a result of cuts in government funding.

David Cameron's claim that "Money is no object" is an insult when the very fire services on the front line – and those sending support

across the country – are seeing closures, cuts and job losses on an unprecedented scale.

We need to step up our campaign on this at a local and national level and the executive council recently agreed a further representative lobby of parliament in March to highlight the range of issues we are campaigning on.

### Pensions

As a union, too, we have been fighting on all fronts. Although



the government's eventual willingness to return to the negotiation table saw a pause in industrial action over pensions, the campaign is by no means over, and difficult negotiations are continuing.

This campaign has been long and, at times, frustrating. The discussions with government can be complex and we regularly need to seek external expert advice on legal, actuarial or other specialist areas.

At times this has meant we have not been able to report things as quickly as we would have liked and some members have become understandably frustrated at what appears to be a lack of information.

Our members have been clear to us about this campaign.

They expect us to negotiate and to explore every single opportunity to alter or improve the position by political, legal or industrial means.

That is what we have been seeking to do in order to try to identify whether the government at Westminster will present an alternative set of proposals. It would, of course, then be up to members to decide collectively whether any such alteration was sufficient. At present

our campaign – and our negotiations – continue.

### Key decisions are political

We are fighting in the most difficult of times. We face outrageous attacks on our pensions; we are seeing the worst cuts ever inflicted on our service (and other public services); and we have a government that does not remotely recognise or support the role our members have played in the recent floods.

On all of these issues we are campaigning – at national, regional and local level. The fire service is run by politicians. Decisions on cuts are made by politicians. Decisions on pensions are

made by politicians. Decisions on funding are made by politicians. Decisions on the statutory role of the fire service in regard to floods are made by politicians.

We need to engage with politicians. We need to try to convince them. We need to challenge them. Often we need to campaign against them. And to do all of this we need to be politically engaged.

Our union – through our conference – voted in 2004 to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. But that does not remotely mean we do not continue to engage and campaign politically. We could not afford to give up this key weapon in our arsenal.

That is why we need our union's political fund. Anti-trade union laws mean that every ten years we are legally obliged to ask our members to vote on using part of our funds politically to stand up for members and their interests.

Very soon, every FBU member will receive a ballot form asking them to vote on the political fund's continued existence. Please make sure you vote YES and return your vote before the deadline.

Firefighters are currently expected to do more than they ever have before – but we are also seeing our service cut at an unprecedented rate. As a union, it is vital that we are equipped to fight on your behalf.



Follow the general secretary on Twitter: @MattWrack

# Contents

## Floods highlight diverse nature of our work

*Don't forget to vote YES and return your ballot paper to maintain your union's right to campaign*

## Political Fund Ballot

14

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*Firefighters at the village of Moorland on the Somerset Levels*

### News

- 4** Firefighters and communities unite against cuts
- 5** Belfast amends pensions legislation  
Lobby your MP
- 6** FBU restructures organisation in Scotland  
Mayor 'misleading Londoners'

### Features

- 10 New raid on pensions**  
Firefighter details the FBU response to plans to impose more increases in contributions
- 12 Statutory duty on flooding**  
Why the government must act
- 14 We're voting YES**  
FBU members at the frontline of campaigns on jobs and services explain why a YES vote is vital in the ballot on the union's political fund
- 16 90% of rescues non-fire**  
Research for the FBU reveals diversity of work performed by fire and rescue service

### Regulars

- 5 Sounding off**  
Stop female genital mutilation
- 7 News focus**  
Atherstone on Stour: FBU report slams organisational systemic failings
- 8 Aerial Ladder Platform**  
Government Communications Headquarters and the fight for union rights
- 18 Health and safety**  
Mesothelioma legislation is not enough
- 19 Legal Beagle**  
Harassment, work and the law
- 20 Day off**  
Boxing clever, saving lives
- 22 Puzzles**  
Win an IOGEAR GMP10K portable battery for smartphones and tablets
- 23 Station Cat**  
The news they don't want you to hear
- 24 25-year badges**

### A sad month for firefighters

It has been a particularly sad month since our last issue, with four firefighters across the country losing their lives.

In Northern Ireland, 44-year-old Nial Hamilton died while dealing with a burning car at Deeny Drive in the Kilwilkie estate in Lurgan, County Armagh on Monday 10 February. The circumstances surrounding his death are being investigated.

In Surrey, Clifford Cox died at Staines fire station on the evening of Saturday 15 February. Both Nial and Clifford had been firefighters for over 20 years.

Chris Payne, a former London firefighter and member of the FBU's London regional committee, died suddenly at the beginning of February at the age of 57.

Tony Stockford, FBU brigade secretary for Oxford City and Oxfordshire between 1967 and 1984, passed away following a long illness on Friday 24 January.

As ever, the thoughts of everyone at the FBU are with the family, friends and colleagues at such a difficult time.



## Firefighters unite with communities against cuts

### Cuts campaigns

With flooding dominating the news – and the lives of thousands of people across the country – the impact of three years of government cuts on fire and rescue services was apparent.

Members reported that shortages of both people and equipment were proving real problems, with some fire services refusing requests to send equipment elsewhere in case it was needed in their own areas.

With this in mind, vigorous and inventive campaigning from firefighters and supporters has seen communities standing up to demand politicians put safety first.

There was some success for the **Cumbrian** anti-cuts campaign after the county council confirmed that it would scale back cuts.

FBU Cumbria secretary Graeme Higgins said: "This is a victory for the communities

of Cumbria, as firefighters now know we will be more able to keep the public – and ourselves – safer. The campaign demonstrates that when firefighters and local people stand together, we can make a difference and fight the devastating cuts that are taking place across the country.

"However, it is not all good news, and we'll continue to fight to keep Dalton fire station open so that the fire and rescue

**Sign the petition!**  
<http://bit.ly/FBUcutspetition>

service can best serve our county and we will continue to argue for the second pump at Barrow remaining 24/7."

In **Surrey**, FBU members will seek legal advice about standing up against the closure of Sunbury and Staines fire stations and their replacement with a single new station in Spelthorne.

92% of the public rejected the proposal in a public consultation, and the area has subsequently been severely affected

by floods.

In **East Sussex**, firefighters sent a Valentine's Day message to local politicians ahead of a crucial vote on cuts to local fire services: "Love the fire service and stop the cuts!"

Members of East Sussex Fire Authority – local councillors – met on Friday 14 February and agreed to consult the public over plans to close fire stations across the county, as well as the loss of as many as 80 firefighters and essential rescue equipment.

FBU president Alan McLean was joined by local MPs Andy McDonald and Tom Blenkinsop at a well-attended rally in **Cleveland** where the area of Teesside is more at risk from industrial fire than almost anywhere else in Europe, but the local fire authority is planning cuts to the fire brigade that could lead to the loss of five full-time fire engines and 130 full-time firefighter jobs as well as the closure of Marine fire station in Middlesbrough town centre.



*A firefighter clears a blocked drain as water is pumped from flooded properties in Datchet, Berkshire, where the Thames burst its banks*

PAUL BOX/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



*Kerry Baigent: In the UK alone, 20,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of female genital mutilation*



## Belfast defies Westminster to amend pensions legislation

### Pension age

FBU members have hailed the decision by the Northern Ireland Assembly to amend pensions legislation as a "victory for common sense" and a demonstration to Westminster that negotiations can work when both sides are committed.

After months of lobbying and dialogue with all political parties, an amendment to pensions legislation on firefighters' pension age was supported by the assembly in February.

Fire Brigades Union general secretary Matt Wrack said: "This decision demonstrates that when both parties are

open-minded and reasonable, trade unions and government can work together in the interests of public services, employees and the public.

"Although the legislation is not perfect, politicians of all parties in Northern Ireland have put others to shame by acknowledging the strength of our evidence and reflecting it in policy.

"Expecting large numbers of firefighters in their late 50s to fight fires and rescue families is not just ludicrous, it's dangerous to the public and to firefighters.

"Politicians in the rest of the UK must listen to the evidence and find a pensions deal that is workable and fair."

## Click and Tweet your MP

### Lobbying your MP

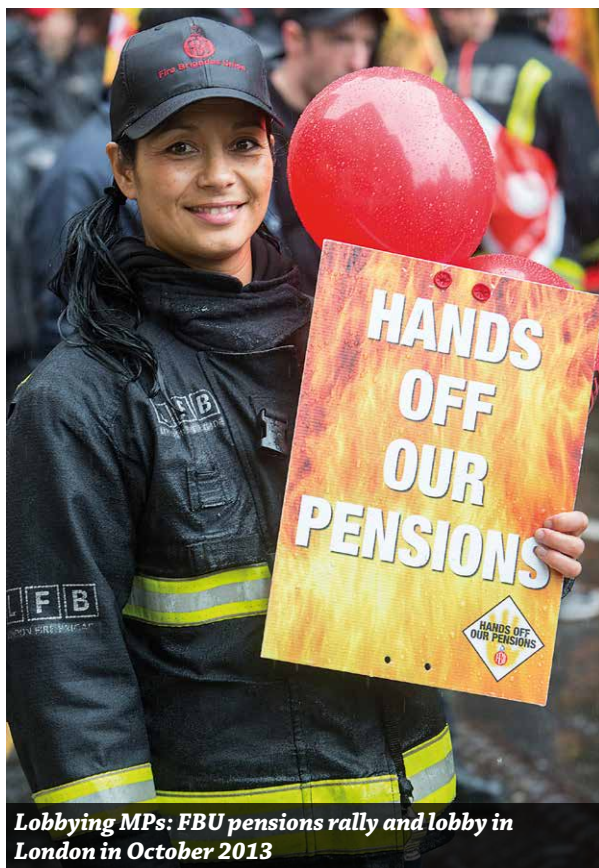
The FBU has recently stepped up efforts to win support for firefighters and the service in Westminster.

A parliamentary motion asking for the introduction of statutory duty on flooding has attracted 78 signatories.

And hundreds of firefighters and supporters have used the union's electronic lobbying system to ask their MPs to pressure the government to stop their attacks on firefighter pensions and return to meaningful discussions with the union.

### Have you written to your MP?

Visit <http://bit.ly/FBUlobbyingpage> to contact your representative in Westminster about flooding and pensions.



**Lobbying MPs: FBU pensions rally and lobby in London in October 2013**

### Are you active on Twitter?

And are you willing to contact your Member of Parliament about issues

that are important to firefighters?

If so, please visit <http://bit.ly/fbutwitterform> and fill out the form.

## SOUNDING OFF

### Time to end female genital mutilation

**FBU national women's committee secretary and Cambridgeshire brigade organiser Kerry Baigent on International Women's Day and the campaign to stop female genital mutilation**

As a trade unionist I am part of the campaign and struggle for a better future for working class people and I am also a feminist and a proud one.

International Women's Day is held on 8 March every year. The first, in 1913, was launched by women across the world fighting for recognition at work, in law, in health and for women's suffrage.

On 8 March I think about the women (and men) that were part of the struggle for women's equality before me and I celebrate their achievements. But more importantly it is a day to highlight the situation of women and girls across the world.

### Violence cannot be tolerated

I am disgusted that, in the UK alone, 20,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of female genital mutilation and that two women each week are being killed by their partner or husband in the UK. This violence cannot be tolerated.

It is vital that trade unionists remember the plight of women and girls when fighting for a better future.

Our daughters deserve to be part of that too and we must ensure that they do not suffer at the hands of a violent partner. Together we can make a difference.

International Women's Day is a day of reflection, a day to campaign and a day to talk to each other about what is going on. It is the beginning, but not the end of our struggle for a better future.



A petition to ask government to ensure the risks of female genital mutilation are taught in schools has attracted over 200,000 signatories. You can find it at <http://bit.ly/FBUFGM>



# FBU restructures its Scottish organisation

## Scotland

Officials from the Fire Brigades Union have agreed new structures for the organisation in Scotland.

The FBU's restructuring follows the creation of a single Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, which replaced eight regional services in April 2013.

Within the FBU in Scotland, seven new districts will be created within three areas: three in the west, two in the north and two in the east.

The Scottish regional

committee is considering where the district's boundaries will lie, but they will reflect the areas covered by local senior officers and local authority boundaries as much as possible.

To maximise democratic accountability, it is intended to ensure a balance of membership numbers between the different districts.

District committees will be made up of representatives from every branch in the district, and each district will elect a chair and secretary by ballot of all its members.

District chairs and secretaries will all attend and vote at Scottish regional committee meetings.

FBU officials from the districts within each of the three areas (north, east, and west) will also appoint a liaison for management at that level (provisionally called a joint secretary).

The Scottish regional committee will also appoint three brigade organisers for Scotland, responsible for recruiting and organising members.



STEFANO CAGNONI

# Mayor accused of misleading Londoners on fire closures

## London

London firefighters have accused mayor Boris Johnson of a "campaign of lies and disinformation" and asked the Greater London Authority's monitoring officer to investigate his behaviour.

The FBU in London says it has evidence showing that the

mayor has breached the GLA's code of conduct after demonstrating statements he made to justify the closure of 10 London fire stations were untrue.

London FBU regional secretary Paul Embery said: "Boris Johnson's lies and disinformation have been so blatant that we believe he has

brought the mayor's office into disrepute.

"Beneath his bluster and his jokey style he has played fast and loose with the facts all the way through the consultation on the closure of London's fire stations.

"The simple truth is that fire and rescue services will get to emergencies more slowly in the future

because of his cuts."

During his campaign to close 10 London fire stations the mayor has claimed that fire deaths are "steadily" declining in the capital and that most Londoners can expect a fire engine to arrive within target attendance times, but London firefighters say both statements are untrue.

**NATIONAL LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANS SCHOOL**  
**28-30 April 2014**  
**Wortley Hall, Sheffield**  
**Contact**  
**Yannick Dubois for an application form:**  
**yanndubois785@hotmail.com**

## IN BRIEF

### Austerity demo

Firefighters from across North Yorkshire will take part in a regional demonstration against austerity next month. The "Better Way" protest has been organised by the Yorkshire and the Humber Trade Union Congress (TUC) and will be held on Saturday 8 March in York. More details at [www.abetterwaydemo.org](http://www.abetterwaydemo.org).

### Orgreave festival

A mass picnic and festival will be held at Catcliffe Recreation Ground on the 30th anniversary of the "Battle of Orgreave". The event, taking place between 11am and 7pm on Saturday 14 June, has been organised by the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign and the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, and will feature speakers, live music, stalls and refreshments. More information at <http://otjc.org.uk>.

**FBU National Women's Committee**  
**FBU National Women's School**  
**4-6 April**  
**[www.nwcfbu.co.uk](http://www.nwcfbu.co.uk)**



# NEWS FOCUS

Four firefighters lost their lives as a result of the fire in Warwickshire

## Atherstone on Stour: 'A catalogue of organisational systemic failings'

### Atherstone on Stour

On 2 November 2007 the fire and rescue service lost more lives in a single incident than it had for 35 years.

Around 100 firefighters were mobilised to fight a fire in a vegetable packing plant near the village of Atherstone on Stour in Warwickshire.

Four FBU members – Ian Reid, John Averis, Ashley Stephens and Darren Yates-Badley – died as a result of the fire.

In February this year the Fire Brigades Union published a summary report of its investigation of the incident.

It found that the fatalities were caused by a "catalogue of organisational systemic failings" by Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, highlighting severe problems with:

- the assessment of risk and planning around it
- the quality of information available to the incident commander
- the use of breathing apparatus
- training, particularly for retained or part-time firefighters.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "Over the last decade, twice as many firefighters lost their lives in fires as in the previous ten years, and it's clear that fire and rescue services and government are not learning lessons from these deaths.

"It is appalling that fire-fighters are in some cases being killed in almost identical circumstances to those in which others have died. This is a terrible failing by those making key strategic decisions within the fire service and by central government.

"We need ministers in all four governments in the UK, as well as chief fire officers, fire authority members and other politicians, to take heed of what happened at Atherstone and work with fire-fighters to ensure such a tragedy is not repeated."

**"Fire and rescue services and government are not learning lessons from these deaths"**

### Safety review

The FBU is working with health and safety specialists from the University of Stirling to review firefighter safety and fatal incidents. This review will report later this year.

Matt Wrack said: "Firefighters and bereaved families have been asking questions for a number of years about why firefighters are being killed at incidents which the service should have planned to deal with.

"We think this highlights deep and systemic failures across the UK fire and rescue service and we are determined to get to the bottom of what is going wrong."

- Full report at <http://bit.ly/FBUwarwickshirereport>



Aerial view of the fire



...DE UNIONISTS  
FOR  
FREEDOM'S  
SAKE

TUC/CCSU

**VIEW**  
FROM THE  
AERIAL LADDER  
PLATFORM

FREEDOM TO  
CHOOSE?  
YOUR JOB  
OR  
YOUR UNION  
SUPPORT GCHQ  
TRADE UNIONISTS

*Mike Grindley, a member of the then National Union of Civil and Public Servants, greets supporters on the day in 1988 that he, along with 13 others, was sacked for refusing to give up his right to belong to a trade union at GCHQ. He was to become chair of GCHQ Trade Unionists, the campaign that restored the right to union membership at the agency in 1997*

JOHN HARRIS/REPORT ARCHIVE/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK





## GCHQ and the right to organise at work

Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) has made the news recently because of its involvement in mass surveillance — and for “hacking” the notorious online activist collective Anonymous. But 30 years ago the intelligence agency made headlines for very different reasons.

On 25 January 1984 Conservative foreign secretary Geoffrey Howe told the nation that all GCHQ staff would be banned from being members of a trade union. As current TUC general secretary, Frances O’Grady, recently put it: “The prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, had decided it wasn’t possible for someone to be in a union and be loyal to their country”. Even most members of her Cabinet were excluded from the decision.

Fourteen trade union members were sacked as a result of refusing to give up their membership, while thousands of others worked for 13 years without the basic protection that union membership provides.

The campaign was long and hard-fought, with marches through the agency’s home town of Cheltenham every January on the ban’s anniversary.

Legal arguments were pursued in both the British courts and the European Commission on Human Rights. The International Labour Organisation ruled that the ban contravened its convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise. Eventually the decision was overturned by the new Labour government in 1997.

Despite this victory, there is still plenty to campaign about over trade union rights. The recently passed Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act will undermine trade union independence and membership confidentiality, while older restrictions, such as those governing how funds can be spent, remain.

The FBU is affiliated to the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom, which campaigns for the rights of workers and trade unions to bargain collectively, organise in the workplace, take part in industrial action and organise independently.

Find out more at [www.tradeunionfreedom.co.uk](http://www.tradeunionfreedom.co.uk)



# New raid on your pension

*Firefighter looks at the government's latest attack and the union's response*



**T**he government plans to impose further increases to firefighters' pension contributions which are due to come into force in April. If this threat is carried out, chancellor George Osborne will grab another large chunk from firefighters' pay packets.

The FBU believes that the proposals are unacceptable and that the government has ignored its own review of these increases. From April 2014 it intends to impose increases starting at 1.3% for Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS) members and 0.8% for New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (NFPS) members. The impacts by role are indicated in the tables opposite.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "These contribution increases are unacceptable. They are a deficit reduction measure and not one penny will go towards improving firefighters' pensions. There is a legitimate fear that a significant number of firefighters will decide to opt out – particularly after the previous increases.

"Even the government's own reviews suggest these increases are wrong and will wreck the scheme. The FBU will

continue to press the argument that these increases are unfair to firefighters and unworkable for public finances."

The FBU believes that the proposal to increase contributions is simply unfair. The increases in contributions will mean that a firefighter in the FPS earning less than £29,000 per year will pay over £4,000 a year in employee contributions.

## **£900 a year more**

Since this government came to power, a wholetime firefighter in the FPS now pays over £900 a year more in pension contributions, while a wholetime firefighter in the NFPS now pays over £500 a year more. This threatens to price many firefighters out of their pension scheme.

Ministers are quick to talk about the generosity of firefighters' schemes, while forgetting firefighters contribute a huge amount towards their own pensions. Firefighters already pay some of the highest contributions in the public

sector. The average contribution to defined benefit schemes in the private sector is 5.2%, but firefighters in both the FPS and NFPS pay at least double that amount – and almost three times more for some officers. The FBU says that contribution increases are unfair and unsustainable.

## **FBU survey**

The FBU has previously presented clear evidence that imposing increased contributions will increase the likelihood of opt-outs. The government assumes that only 1% of firefighters will opt out from their pension schemes, despite overwhelming evidence that opt-out levels will be far higher.

As part of the FBU's professional research, the union has commissioned the independent polling organisation YouGov to survey members on opt-outs. YouGov carried out a further survey of FBU members in November

**"These increases are both unfair and unworkable"**





PHIL DISLEY

and December 2013 and the results are consistent with previous findings.

The most recent YouGov survey showed that the risk of opt-outs is still very high. It found that 43% of respondents would be likely or very likely to take this course of action if the proposal to increase the employee contribution is implemented. Almost a quarter (22%) of respondents said they would be very likely to opt out if contributions are raised.

### Government review

The government has also carried out its own review – and the figures confirm the FBU's worst fears.

Between April and September 2013, of those firefighters who took up employment and became eligible to join, the review shows that 15% did not become members of a pension scheme.

The actual number of non-joiners was higher, but the figures were adjusted down to discount those who chose not to join on auto enrolment, those on temporary contracts and those aged over 50.

But, looking at all the factors involved, the situation is quite different once these firefighters are factored in. Altogether, almost 50% of eligible joiners for that period chose not to join the NFPS scheme.

Because the firefighters' schemes are not funded, today's contributions pay for today's pensions. If significant numbers of firefighters opt out and the flow of funds is reduced, the schemes will either require substantial subsidy from the Treasury or will be wrecked.

### Where now?

The FBU made a detailed and lengthy submission to government about this latest round of planned increases, with evidence backed by actuaries and independent bodies.

The union explained that so-called "protection measures" for lower-paid workers on £21,000 or less simply do not help firefighters.

The union also highlighted the impact of tiered increases on officer members, who could face huge bills. It pointed out anomalies for members who have received allowances which count as pensionable pay and which could push some firefighters into higher tiers.

But the indications from government so far are that it will impose the full increase from April 2014.

Matt Wrack said: "The government needs to listen to the professional voice of firefighters. FBU officials will not rest to defend the pensions firefighters have earned through our outstanding work."

**Table 1: FPS, proposed firefighter contribution increases 2014-15**

| Full time pay             | Contribution rate 2014-15 (%) | Total extra annual contributions April 2014-March 2015 (£) | Additional cost per month April 2014-March 2015 (£) |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Wholetime firefighter     | 14.2                          | 374  | 31  |
| Wholetime crew manager    | 14.7                          | 478  | 40  |
| Wholetime watch manager   | 14.7                          | 535  | 45  |
| Wholetime station manager | 15.2                          | 696  | 58  |
| Wholetime group manager   | 15.2                          | 805  | 67  |
| Wholetime area manager    | 15.5                          | 990  | 83  |

**Table 2: NFPS, proposed firefighter contribution increases 2014-15**

| Full time pay                                  | Contribution rate 2014-15 (%) | Total extra annual contributions April 2014-March 2015 (£) | Additional cost per month April 2014-March 2015 (£) |
|--|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Retained firefighter (full retainer)           | 10.4                          | 23   | 2   |
| Retained firefighter (£10,000 pensionable pay) | 10.4                          | 80   | 7   |
| Wholetime development firefighter              | 10.4                          | 180  | 15  |
| Wholetime firefighter                          | 10.4                          | 230  | 19  |
| Wholetime crew manager                         | 10.9                          | 319  | 27  |
| Wholetime watch manager                        | 10.9                          | 357  | 30  |

Figures are rounded and do not include tax relief. Some firefighters pay more because of London weighting and other allowances.



**F**loods at the end of last and start of this year have caused enormous upheaval across the UK. At least seven fatalities have been attributed to

flooding. More than 1,700 homes in England were flooded, mainly the south east and south west, with the Midlands, Wales and Scotland also affected. Some 750,000 homes lost power and Gatwick Airport suffered problems.

In early December 2013, an exceptional coastal surge along the east and parts of the west coast flooded around 1,400 properties and damaged infrastructure.

Record surge levels were experienced in many places, including North Shields, Whitby, Hull, Immingham and Dover. In Wales, Rhyl was badly hit. The storms also resulted in the flooding of agricultural land and sites of special scientific interest.

Like 2014, 2012 was a record year for rain and floods – it was the second wettest year on record for the UK.

Eleven major flood events lasted a cumulative total of 72 days. Flooding from a range of sources (rivers, surface water and ground-water) affected both urban and rural areas. Around 8,000 properties were flooded, with some of the worst affected areas in the north east and the south west.

Government ministers Owen Paterson and Brandon Lewis have praised the work of the emergency services in responding to floods. But they have not committed to providing the resources and the legal backing the fire and rescue service needs to continue to respond to flood events.

#### **Fire station flooded**

Although more boats and high volume pumps are now available, there are still serious deficiencies in the training, PPE, equipment and facilities provided for firefighters to do our jobs during flooding.

For example, many local FBU officials report that flooding is not included in their local IRMP document. At least one fire station in Surrey was flooded during the recent downpours and more than one in ten fire stations is located in a flood risk area.

Firefighters have told the union that during the recent floods they were out in regular fire kit because specialist water rescue PPE was not available.

Neither was there enough dedicated

**February 2014: Firefighters help to evacuate residents from flooded homes in Walton-on-Thames**

OLI SCARFF/GETTY IMAGES



# **Flood fighters: Why we need a statutory duty**

The FBU has renewed its demands for all UK fire services to have a statutory duty to deal with floods and for an end to cuts to emergency services that are endangering lives





## “The government has ignored our call for proper planning”

most needed. This is not just a local response, but the government has so far ignored our call for proper national planning for such risks.”

The FBU argues that a statutory duty for firefighters to attend floods would help fire and rescue services as a whole plan effectively and reduce risk to life and property. Such a duty has already been adopted in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Wrack said: “It is irresponsible and ludicrous that major flooding like we’ve seen recently is not a clear statutory responsibility of the service.

“That should be made clear immediately. It is easily done, and only requires an order under existing legislation – the Fire and Rescue Services Act. That step has already been taken in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but Westminster refuses to follow.”

### National vandalism

The FBU believes funding cuts for emergency services must end. Fire and rescue service budgets have been cut by nearly 20% since this government came to power. There are 5,000 fewer firefighters today than at the time of the 2007 floods.

Wrack said: “It is a travesty that many of the crews, fire stations and special appliances involved in recent rescues are under threat from government expenditure cuts. These cuts amount to national vandalism, not financial prudence.

“Firefighters are on the frontline when floods take place, yet the government is slashing fire and rescue budgets to ribbons.

“Our ability to protect public safety during floods, fires, road traffic accidents and major incidents such as terrorist attacks is already being tested to breaking point, and further cuts will endanger lives.”

equipment, including the right kind of boats, poles and other kit to go round in some brigades. Radio equipment was inadequate in at least one fire and rescue service.

Control rooms in the worst affected areas, already understaffed, were inundated by a high volume of calls from distressed members of the public. Training for floods before the latest incidents has been variable. Some officials report recent improvements, but not enough firefighters have received training for swift-water rescue or boat operations.

### Statutory duty

The FBU is stepping up its campaign for a statutory duty on the fire and rescue service to respond to major flooding in England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland already have such a duty.

The Pitt Review, which was commissioned by government after the floods of 2007 which claimed 13 lives, recommended a statutory duty. Even the Chief Fire Officers Association agrees it is needed.

The FBU wants this government and the Labour Party to support the implementation of the duty as a matter of urgency and as part of a national plan to deal with all aspects of flooding.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: “Firefighters have done a magnificent job in recent months responding to flood and storm incidents across many parts of the country, rescuing and evacuating large numbers of people, saving lives and preventing further risk.

“In many cases firefighters travelled long distances across the country to provide support where it was



# Why we are vot

Every member of the FBU will soon receive a ballot paper on the union's political fund. Here members and officials tell *Firefighter* why they are voting YES

## Chris Grundy

**FBU member, Nottingham**

“I joined the FBU because I knew that they've always stood up for their members. At the moment my pension is being taken away and our fire services are under attack like never before. We need the political fund to stand up for each other and the communities that we serve. That's why, for me, we have to vote YES in the ballot.”



## Sharon Riley

**Executive council member for control members**

“The FBU faces many challenges, we always have. We always give of our best for what is right in protecting service delivery, the public, firefighters and, of course, jobs. All our fights, be they against control and station closures, or against restructuring and job losses, will necessitate political lobbying, campaigning and pressure. This is something the FBU does well, really well. But we are only able to do this because members give us a political fund with which to fight. The long campaign against regional control centres is a case in point. We chose to fight. It was not easy, we were the only voice against RCCs, but we knew we had to do it. Thanks to the political pressure we were able to put on councillors, MPs and successive ministers, we managed to turn the tide. Vote YES to keep a political fund.”

## Chris Jackson

**Former FBU brigade secretary for Avon – Bristol City councillor and member of Avon Fire Authority**

“I am a former fire-fighter and FBU brigade secretary in Avon FRS. I have been a Bristol city councillor for over five years and, following my retirement, I now sit as a serving member of Avon Fire Authority. This has given me access to senior politicians where I have fought for FBU members and the policies of the union. I could not have done any of this without the practical support I received from the FBU. I give FBU members a voice where it matters most – at their fire authority. That's why politics matters and that's why I urge all FBU members to vote YES in the political fund ballot.”



## Jim Calder

**Kings Norton fire station, Birmingham, 27 years service**

“I'm as frustrated with politics as anyone else, but that's exactly why we need a union that can challenge the government and campaign for

things that are important to fire-fighters, whether our own terms and conditions, brigade budgets or to show solidarity with firefighters abroad. A strong YES result will send the signal that we're as ready as ever to stand up for what's right.”



# ing YES

## Political Fund Ballot



2014



### Les Skarratts

Regional secretary,  
North West

“It is vitally important that we not only get a YES vote in the political fund ballot, but that it is a big YES vote to remind the political elite that the FBU remains a campaigning union determined to take on those that promote austerity, inequality and lack of justice and that we will fight them all the way. The austerity policies from this government inevitably lead to poorer communities. More deprivation means more fires and deaths from fire – that is widely accepted. To cut firefighter jobs and close fire stations at the same time is simply but intentionally cruel. We must continue campaigning and fighting against policies determined to imperil our communities.”

### Cerith Griffiths

Regional chair, Wales

“Political intervention in Wales has recently seen the most devastating attacks on FRS and FBU members stopped. The help and support of fire authority members, Welsh government ministers and members of parliament has been invaluable. Supporting politicians who are true to the values and beliefs of the FBU is crucial if we are to maintain an effective fire and rescue service that is able to respond to and deal with each incident effectively.”



### Roddy Robertson

Executive council member,  
Scotland

“Without a political fund we would be unable to raise members' issues directly with the people who ultimately make life-changing decisions about our service. The political fund is crucial to the very many issues that the union faces in all nations. Vote YES.”



### Dave Green

National officer

“A trade union simply can't function effectively without a political fund. Any campaign we've fought – and any victory we've won – has been possible because of it. Firefighters are currently trying to fight off two of the most significant challenges we have ever faced: attacks on our pensions and cuts to the service itself. We need the political fund as much as we ever have done to stand up for firefighters and the communities we serve. There's no doubt the government would love us to lose the political fund which would stop our campaign work dead in its tracks. But this union has always been about standing up for what's right and, so long as members vote YES to retain the political fund, we're not going to stop any time soon.”

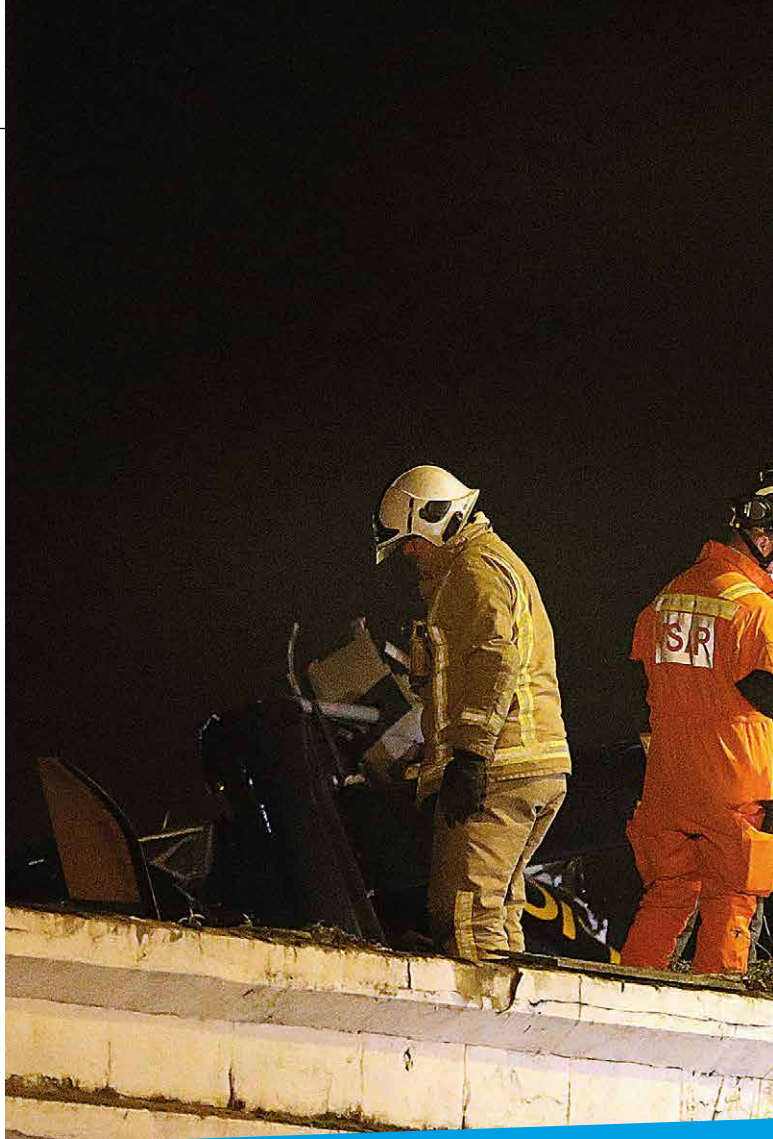




Nine out of ten rescues by firefighters take place in non-fire incidents like floods, road traffic collisions, hazardous chemical spills and lift rescues, research for the FBU has shown

ANDREW MILLIGAN/PA PHOTOS

*Firefighters at the scene of the helicopter crash at the Clutha Bar in Glasgow last November*



# 97 RESCUES

**W**hile the coalition government likes to use the fact that there are generally fewer fires than there were ten years ago as an excuse for devastating cuts to fire and rescue services, firefighters know that their role is more diverse than ever.

The public rely on firefighters to respond to flooding, road traffic accidents and other major incidents such as terrorism. And fires like Smethwick and Buncefield show how we always need a fully staffed service to respond when large fires occur.

The Department for Communities and Local Government does not publish rescue figures systematically and has not done so since the turn of the century. But recent research by Labour Research

Department for the Fire Brigades Union has revealed just how much work firefighters undertake across this broad range of activity.

Between April 2012 and March 2013, firefighters in England, Wales and Northern Ireland undertook 35,556 rescues. This equates to 2,963 a month, 684 a week or 97 a day. (Figures for Scotland were not available.)

Remarkably, 32,065 of these rescues – 90% – were carried out at non-fire incidents, including floods, road traffic collisions, chemical spills and lift rescues.

## Fire safety

Although the total annual number of rescues being made across the UK as a whole was lower than the last published figure from 1999 (5,099), the figure of 4,276 remained high, demonstrating

## MOST FIRE RESCUES



North  
West



London

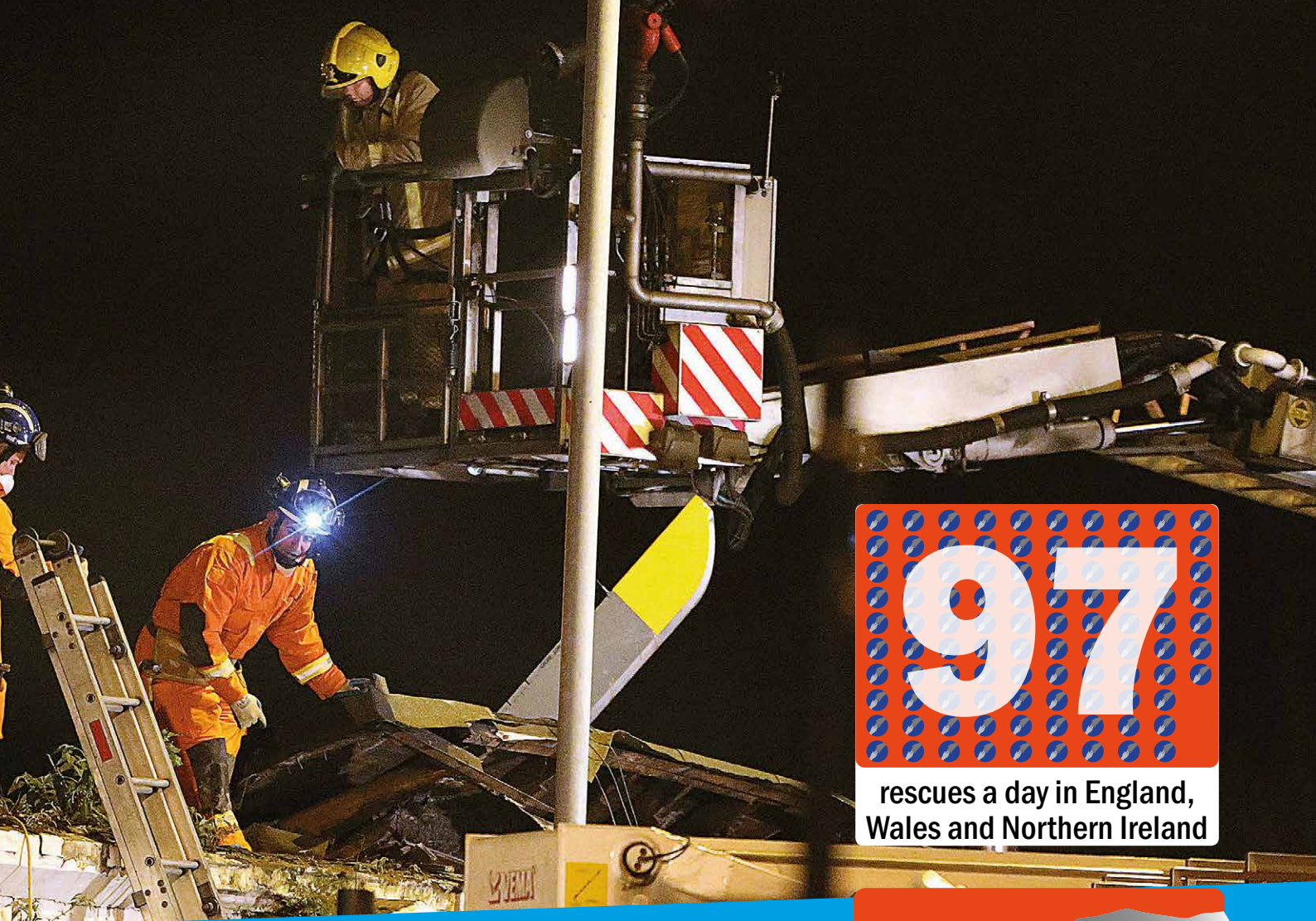


East of  
England

the continued importance of the fire and rescue service's responses to fires themselves, particularly as this decrease is largely owing to work undertaken by firefighters, such as building inspections and community fire safety work.

More rescues were carried out in the East of England than anywhere else, although it was the North West





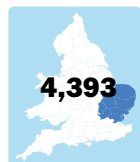
**97**  
rescues a day in England,  
Wales and Northern Ireland

# A DAY

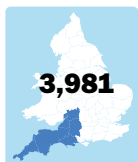


**35,556**  
rescues a year

## MOST RESCUES



East of  
England



South  
West



London

that carried out the most fire rescues specifically.

During the research, questions were raised about how some brigades record and release information on rescues.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, for example, provided no returns for rescues at non-fire incidents where people were injured. West Midlands Fire

Service provided no returns for rescues at non-fire incidents where people were unharmed.

It also became clear that there were issues around the detail recorded: recording both a basement flood and a whole high street as single incidents masks very different resource requirements.

### Underestimates

Our researchers felt it might be possible that some brigades are not recording every incident, so the overall figures may actually represent underestimates.

Whatever the true figure, the stats show clearly how the service provides an irreplaceable response to a huge range of emergencies, reinforcing just how vital a role firefighters play during emergency intervention.

**90%**

of rescues at non-fire  
incidents



# MESOTHELIOMA

## New Act is too little and too late for victims

*The amount represents only 75% of the potential compensation that victims should receive*

### Mesothelioma Act

Mesothelioma is a cancer of the cells that cover many of our internal body organs.

The British Lung Foundation describes it as “one of the more difficult medical conditions that people have to face”. It most commonly affects the chest (pleural) but also can affect the abdomen (peritoneal) and elsewhere.

Most cases are caused by exposure to asbestos while at work, with symptoms generally appearing 20 to 30 years after exposure. Although prolonged exposure makes contraction more likely, even momentary exposure can eventually result in the illness.

### Secondary exposure

“Secondary exposure” can also occur. Mesothelioma develops in someone as a result of their contact with a person who has been exposed directly to asbestos even if they themselves have not — by washing their clothes, for instance.

Asbestos began to be widely used as an insulating material in the 1950s, so mesothelioma incidence rates increased almost four-fold from the early 1980s. Around 2,500 people were diagnosed in the UK in 2010. Asbestos was mostly banned in 1985 and the number of mesothelioma deaths is expected to peak in 2016 and decline rapidly thereafter.

Mesothelioma is not easy for doctors to diagnose or treat. Symptoms of pleural

mesothelioma include shortness of breath and chest pain. Symptoms of peritoneal mesothelioma include weight loss, pain and swelling in the abdomen, bowel obstruction, blood clotting abnormalities, anaemia and fever.

If the cancer spreads to other parts of the body, symptoms can include pain, difficulty swallowing and swelling of the neck or face.

Because it is often diagnosed only when it has reached an advanced stage, the outlook for mesothelioma patients is poor. Most people diagnosed with mesothelioma will die within three years of the diagnosis.

Firefighters are at particular risk from mesothelioma. Fires can cause asbestos to become “friable” — easily crumbled — or airborne. Firefighters are also more likely to be exposed to asbestos, particularly when fighting fires in buildings built before it was banned.

### Fund of last resort

In 2006 the TUC proposed a “fund of last resort” for people entitled to compensation for a disease they acquired as a result of work, but whose employers have no liability insurer or whose insurer cannot be traced.

The previous government published a consultation on

the proposal in 2010, but the coalition government asked for more time to consider it.

The Mesothelioma Act was passed by the UK parliament in January. It sets up a fund of last resort for victims of mesothelioma enabling them to access 75% of the average settlement by civil courts for this kind of claim.

The government estimates that 900 people will be likely to qualify for support in 2014, with 300 expected to receive support in each of the following nine years.

Campaigners have criticised the exclusion of other diseases from the legislation as well as other aspects of the Act.

John McClean, national health and safety officer at the GMB union, said the legislation was deficient in two areas: “First, the amount only represents 75% of the potential compensation that victims should receive. Second, those who will be entitled to this limited amount will only qualify from July 2012.”

### More information:

- ➔ [www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/type/mesothelioma/](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/type/mesothelioma/)
- ➔ [www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Cancertypes/Mesothelioma](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Cancertypes/Mesothelioma)
- ➔ [www.mesothelioma.uk.com/](http://www.mesothelioma.uk.com/)
- ➔ [www.nhs.uk/conditions/mesothelioma/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mesothelioma/)
- ➔ [www.blf.org.uk/Conditions/Detail/Mesothelioma](http://www.blf.org.uk/Conditions/Detail/Mesothelioma)
- ➔ [www.hazardscampaign.org.uk](http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk)





# Legal Beagle

## Harassment, work and the law

**FBU**  
**FREEPHONE**  
**LEGAL ADVICE**  
**0808 100 6061**  
**IN SCOTLAND**  
**0800 089 1331**

**Q I am concerned that I might be being harassed at work. How is harassment defined in law?**

**A** Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”.

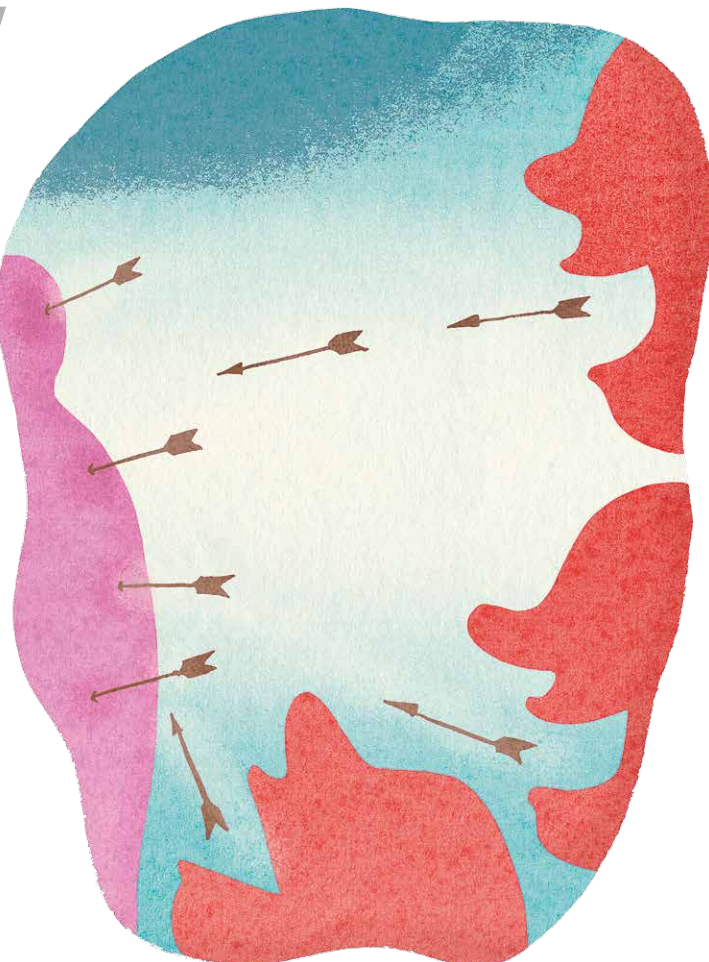
The unwanted conduct must be related to a “protected characteristic”. A relevant protected characteristic is age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Unwanted conduct can be overt or covert. Examples include “banter”, comments or taunts relating to a colleague’s accent, sexuality, or dress.

Excluding an employee from a conversation because of their characteristic is as much unwanted conduct as violence, abuse or jokes. An employee subject to harassment does not have to expressly object to the conduct for it to be unwanted.

Because unwanted conduct need only relate to a protected characteristic, those who are subject to unwanted conduct because they are associated with another person who has a characteristic are also covered.

For example, a firefighter subject to homophobic comments because their son is gay is protected. Similarly, a firefighter subject to harassment because they are perceived to have a protected



characteristic will also be protected.

In order to succeed in a claim of harassment before an employment tribunal, you do not have to show how others who do not have the protected characteristic have been, or would have been treated. Nor can an employer defend a claim by saying they disapprove or are unaware of the offensive conduct.

An employer may have a defence to a claim of harassment if they can show that they took reasonable steps to prevent the offending employee from carrying out acts of harassment.

This could be through having a policy on harassment that is displayed through public notices informing staff of a zero tolerance approach to

harassment.

The Grey Book recommends that fire and rescue authority policies on harassment should include statements on the standards of behaviour expected of individuals and that all employees should be aware of their responsibilities to each other. But simply having such a policy in place is highly unlikely to stand as a defence in itself.

**Q I have witnessed a colleague being harassed which has made me feel uncomfortable. Am I protected?**

**A** The definition of harassment in the Equality Act 2010 is wide enough to cover those who

witness another colleague who is subject to harassment which relates to a “protected characteristic”.

For example, a male colleague who witnesses another male colleague being subject to racist comments could bring a claim of harassment.

In order to succeed in a claim, the witness would have to be able to satisfy the legal test. So they would have to show that the unwanted conduct violated their dignity or created a hostile, degrading or humiliating working environment and that it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

**Q I've been subject to harassment by a member of the public. Am I protected?**

**A** The Equality Act 2010 provided protection for workers subject to harassment by third parties, but the government repealed this provision on 1 October 2013.

However, it may still be possible to bring a claim under the Equality Act for harassment. In particular, it may be possible to argue that the employer’s failure to take action to protect you from harassment by others itself amounts to unwanted conduct because it creates a hostile or degrading environment. This, though, may now be much more difficult to prove

■ Advice from Jo Seery, an employment rights solicitor at Thompsons Solicitors



# 'Boxing gives young people a real outlet for their energy'

**Two London firefighters are using the discipline of boxing to give young people who want to a chance to change**

## Champions Mentor

An inspiring programme set up by two Battersea, south London, firefighters is helping to equip young people with the mindset and skills to thrive – through learning how to box.

Champions Mentor, devised and delivered by blue watch boxing enthusiasts Dave Waterman and Vince Anderson, has been running since 2010 and continues to help to transform young lives.

Firefighters wouldn't last long in the job without self-discipline, self-respect and respect for others – not to mention time keeping and obeying the rules.

Dave and Vince, Amateur Boxing Association of England (ABAE) trained boxing coaches, have seen many young people discover strengths within themselves which go way beyond boxing prowess.

Wandsworth, like many London boroughs, has deprived estates cheek by jowl with million-pound houses. Some

young people who attend Champions Mentor are referred with behaviour or anger management problems.

Some are A-grade students who just want to learn to box, but all need to commit to turning up.

The ethos of the sessions, held twice a week at Caius House Youth Club, is inclusive and non-judgemental. As both men stress: "It's all about structure." Fellow firefighters who are qualified boxing coaches help run sessions.

## Discipline

"Walk through the door and there's a safe, structured environment with rules," says Dave, who knows at first hand how the discipline that comes with boxing can help turn lives around.

"Boxing gave me, as a young boy who was going off the rails, a bit of focus. Being involved in Champions Mentor means I can offer local young people a chance to do the same." Dave went on to box when he joined the army and later, for the London Fire Brigade.

The pressures on disadvantaged young people can be acute, as gang culture and knife crime blight too many lives. "The young people who come in and work with us have outside lives," says Vince, who was born in Battersea and has a long-standing commitment to help young people in the area to prosper.

"When they step through the club door they obey the rules – for the most part. It gives them a real outlet for their energy. They learn disciplines they can apply to their everyday living. They don't have to follow what their friends do. "No one is ever forced to stay, but many remain with us."



**Dave and Vince with their coach and students before a demonstration bout at a charity boxing show**







## DAVE WATERMAN AND VINCE ANDERSON

Dave Waterman (right) and Vince Anderson founded the BWB Foundation and set up Champions Mentor to help transform young lives

For those who join, there's a lot to learn before sparring can start, Dave explains. "Initially, they learn the art of boxing as a non-contact sport – the art of defence and the importance of good footwork. Only after working towards the preliminary, standard and bronze awards are they allowed to progress to full contact.

"We are not going to be asking them to fight in competitions until they take to the sport and have a good grounding in the skills required to engage in combat."

For Vince, helping local young people achieve their potential "by creating something that lives beyond me" is a key motivation.

### A chance to change

He conducts presentations for young people who have been excluded from school, as well as those living in care and sees the need. "95 per cent of those kids want to make a change.

"The Champions Mentor programme gives them a chance to make that change happen."

Vince brings a fresh perspective to boxing. He is also a practitioner of the fighting arts and has spent over 20 years learning the Chinese martial arts of Ving Tsun and T'ai chi ch'uan.

This, coupled with his keen interest in yoga and the meditative arts, helps him impart a much-needed sense of calm to the youngsters who attend Champions Mentor sessions.

The sessions last for two-hours and are held twice a week. Participants follow lesson plans accredited by the ABAE and can progress to bronze level. Sessions can also help young people gain a credit towards a GCSE in boxing.

In 2007 Vince and Dave founded the BWB Foundation to bring together people "who want to make a difference in a world where the less fortunate are all too often forgotten".

They and BWB colleagues reach out to local people through offering boxing taster sessions at the annual Sport in the Park event in Battersea Park.

## "When they step through the club door they obey the rules – for the most part"

The programme has now become embedded in the community – and has attracted funding from partners such as Caius House, Battersea Crime Prevention Panel and Wandsworth Council.

In 2011, just a year after Champions Mentor started, the programme was nominated for an Active Wandsworth Award, Vince won a Wandsworth Community Champion Award and a student on the programme won a Wandsworth Young Person of the Year Award.

The BWB Foundation supports Champions Mentor. Its aim is to raise funds for the programme and assist other local charities. This is achieved by staging "white collar boxing" events, involving local firefighters.

### 'Big fight' experience

It provides both experienced boxers and novices with the chance to "step through the ropes" and have a "big fight" experience in front of colleagues, friends and family. Some excel.

Battersea firefighter Stuart McDonald, the reigning BWB welterweight champion, was a novice until four years ago.

There are exciting times ahead. Champions Mentor will move next year into new state-of-the-art facilities when Caius House opens one of the largest youth clubs in Europe in the borough.

It looks as if the programme – and the firefighters who run it – will continue to punch well above their weight, helping to give young people in the locality a better deal.

● [www.bwbfoundation.com](http://www.bwbfoundation.com)



Vince Anderson gives a boxing lesson at the Sport In The Park event



# Prize quiz



## An IOGEAR GMP10K portable battery for smartphones and tablets

### HOW TO ENTER

To win an IOGEAR GMP10K portable battery for smartphones and tablets send your answers by **31 March 2014** on a postcard to: **Prize Competition (March 2014), FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE.** Please include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.

**1** *Polaris is the music equivalent in which country to the UK's Mercury Prize?*

- A – Australia
- B – Greece
- C – Canada
- D – Denmark

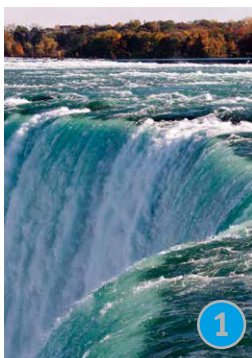
**2** *Which of the following is not a dish made of herring?*

- A – Kipper
- B – Rollmop
- C – Lox
- D – Surströmming



**3** *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were members of which gang?*

- A – The Hole In The Wall gang
- B – Billy The Kid's gang
- C – The Dodge City gang
- D – The Stockton gang

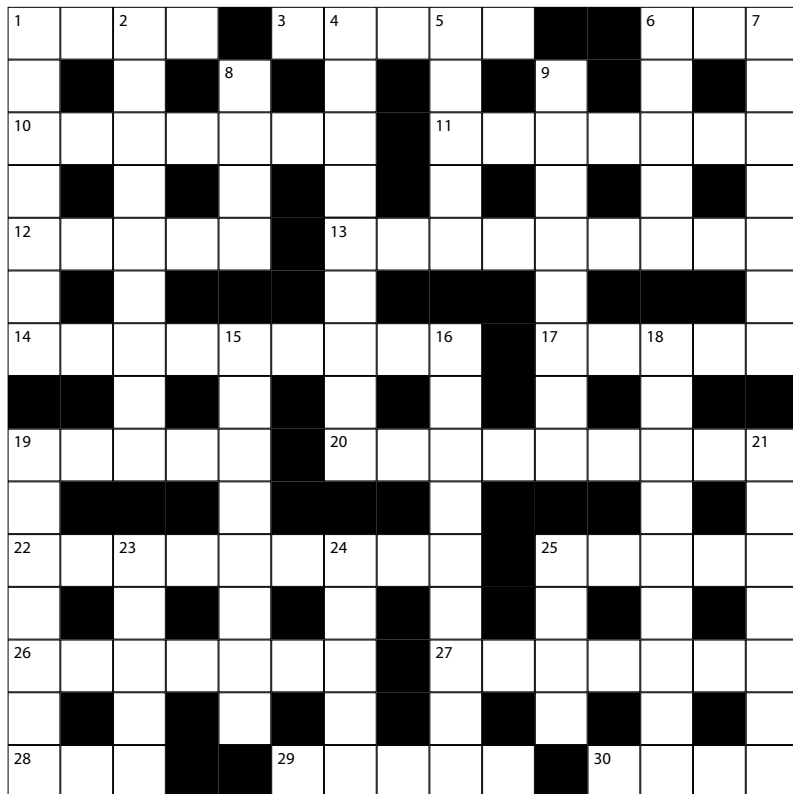


**4** *A red and yellow vertically striped flag means what in motor racing?*

- A – Oil on the track
- B – A penalty for bad conduct
- C – Calls a car in for a mechanical problem
- D – A false start

**5** *"All this happened, more or less." is the opening of which novel?*

- A – Catcher in the Rye
- B – Catch-22
- C – Humboldt's Gift
- D – Slaughterhouse-Five



## CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

- 1** Bigger than a boat (4)
- 3** Australian marsupial 'bear' related to wombat (5)
- 6** Alchemist's element, can feed 25 down (3)
- 10** Twin-winged aircraft (7)
- 11** Ideal place for a cuppa? (3-4)
- 12** Alchemist's element – could starve 25 down of 6 (5)
- 13** One who watches – a right-wing magazine? (9)
- 14** Last day of April, June, September or November (9)
- 17** Not asleep (5)
- 19** 1 across's lowest compartment, or the 23 pumped out of it (5)
- 20** Room at the inn? (6,3)
- 22** Such as the Mirror, Guardian or Morning Star (9)
- 25** Untrue, artificial (5)
- 26** Draw towards, as a magnet (7)
- 27** Organise (7)
- 28** Hearing organ (3)
- 29** Pugilist – with four legs? (5)
- 30** One between twelve and twenty (4)

### DOWN

- 1** Theme; field of study (7)
- 2** Neutral (9)
- 4** Fail to be 17 in time (9)
- 5** Metric unit of capacity – 1.76 pints (5)
- 6** Take on as one's own (5)
- 7** Sorrow; regret (7)
- 8** Wonga! (4)
- 9** Seasoned smoked beef – lovely in rye bread! (8)
- 15** Actor (8)
- 16** Sleep 'til spring (9)
- 18** Vehicle chased by lawyers? (9)
- 19** Strip of material applied to injury (7)
- 21** Posh girls' school (7)
- 23** Alchemist's element – can put out 25 down (5)
- 24** Outdoor space adjoining house for eating etc (5)
- 25** Alchemist's element – fed by 6 across and dampened by 23 (4)

Last issue's answers and winners



### Crossword solution January/February

#### January/February quiz answers

- 1** – C – 1994
- 2** – C – The Ecuadorian embassy
- 3** – D – 65
- 4** – A – JFK
- 5** – B – Doctor Who

#### Winner of November/December quiz

Rikki Harden, Clwyd



# Station Cat

## Confusion reigns as floods rise

*Invisible man: Eric Pickles, secretary of state for communities and local government was swiftly removed from the role of government flood frontman after trying to pass the blame to the Environment Agency*

JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



### The curious incident of the minister in the fire station ...

So defence secretary Philip Hammond puts on his concerned face and toddles off to Surrey to have a look at all these floods he's been hearing about.

First he gets harangued by local residents who think the government hasn't been doing anything much. Then off he goes to Chertsey fire station with chief fire officer Russell Pearson to say "Well done lads, government's right behind you".

And he looks around at all the firefighters and their fire engines, and thinks, everything's for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

But what he saw wasn't quite the reality. The truth about the fire station had been imperceptibly altered.

### ... and the Case of the Vanishing Tape

What was it they hid from the Defence Secretary? Well, here's the story.

The Cat's regular readers, both of them, will recall that back in September, she reported that Surrey's new incident command unit (ICU), which was supposed to be ready for the Olympics, wasn't.

Well, it wasn't ready for ages after that, either. The second-hand Renault bus cost just £75,000 to buy. But refits to turn it into a proper ICU have already cost £225,000 and counting.



**Firefighters pass as defence secretary Philip Hammond talks to journalists in the flooded Thames-side village of Wraysbury**

It's a mess, say firefighters who have used it. It's got rust, it handles badly and, to cap it all, the other day firefighters returned to the still-running ICU to find the internal carbon monoxide detectors sounding.

Three people were taken to hospital with suspected carbon monoxide poisoning.

Now, this may, or may not, be why the thing was taken out of service. But taken out of service it certainly was, and tape was put round it to show that it wasn't to be used. And the tape stayed there – until just before the defence secretary arrived.

Then someone ordered the tape to be taken away. Mr Hammond must have assumed he was looking at a fully functional vehicle.

Perhaps someone feared the Cabinet minister would say: "They've got something they're not using. Obviously they have too much equipment, we can cut their budget even

further." And, of course, he might have done just that.

### They know who is responsible ...

Surrey firefighters get quite irate about this ICU. "This vehicle is an utter joke, it was leaking water on the drill yard for six months and a member of staff got an electric shock when they touched a computer. Those responsible for this disaster should be sacked and ordered to pay back the money from their pensions. We know the jokers who implemented this ..." one of them fumed on the Facebook page of Firefighters United ([facebook.com/FirefightersUnited](http://facebook.com/FirefightersUnited)).

### ... but Pickles gets blame game wrong

While we're talking about Philip Hammond, the Cat is sometimes asked why it's the defence secretary who is being put up as the public face of the government's flood operation.

Here's why: It was to be

Eric Pickles, secretary of state for communities and local government. Pickles tried to make out that the floods and the slow government response were all the fault of the Environment Agency.

That claim unravelled within 24 hours as the agency made it clear their resources had been wrecked by coalition cuts, and David Cameron told the world that he had faith in the agency and its boss, former Labour politician Chris, now Lord, Smith. You won't hear a peep out of Pickles until it's all over.

### Suit yourself – after the cuts, we can't

Norfolk FRS have despatched firefighters and equipment to the West Country. They will find their beleaguered colleagues there in a mutinous mood.

One of the Cat's friends in the West Country told her: "A lot of us have been working 16-hour days.

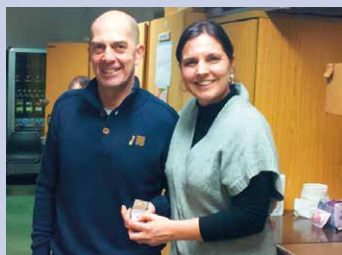
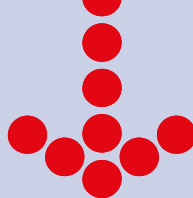
"We ran out of dry suits – you take one off at the end of your shift, hose it down, and pass it on to the next person. How would you like to put on a dry suit which someone else has been working hard in for 16 hours?

"And the reason we have to work like that is because we've had 150 jobs cut.

"We've had Cameron and Pickles down here – but where were they when our fire service was being cut by 20 per cent? All they're concerned about is trying to minimise the political damage."



# 25-year badges



**Keith Dolan** (l) receives his 25-year badge from Cambridgeshire brigade chair Kerry Baigent



**Dane Rollo** (r), officers' rep, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Tony Curry



**I Ronaldson** (c,l), white watch, Leigh, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Gary Keary



**Barry Culver** (2nd r), green watch, Sunbury, Surrey, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Jez Spencer with colleagues (l-r) Leila Johns, Rob Clark, Mick Fitzgerald and Graham Willis



**Pete Partridge** (c, r) Westbourne, Dorset receives his 25-year badge from membership organiser Scott Blandford with colleagues looking on



**Kevin Hickson** (l), branch rep Godstone, Surrey, receives his 25-year badge and a gift from brigade secretary Richard Jones



**Gary Parker** (l), white watch, Hindley, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from divisional chair Rob Grundy



**Steve Horrocks** (l), Blackburn, Lancashire, branch rep, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Steve Harman



**Keith Ritchie** (l), St Neots, receives his 25-year badge from Cambridgeshire brigade chair Cameron Matthews



**G Hesketh** (c, l), white watch, Leigh, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Gary Keary



**Mervyn Housden** (l), St Neots, receives his 25-year badge from Cambridgeshire brigade chair Cameron Matthews



**J Howard** (r), white watch, Leigh, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep I Ronaldson

Please send prints or digital files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or [firefighter@fbu.org.uk](mailto:firefighter@fbu.org.uk). Please include full details for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where and when it was taken.

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### Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Organiser of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

## FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

**0808 100 6061**

(England, Wales and N. Ireland),

**0800 089 1331**

(Scotland),

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues. For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.

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